## **Graywater Frequently Asked Questions**

- 1. What is graywater?
  - Graywater is untreated wastewater that has not come into contact with toilet waste.
     Graywater includes used water from bathtubs, showers, bathroom sinks, clothes washing machines and laundry sinks. It does not include wastewater from kitchen sinks, dishwashers, photo lab sinks or laundry water from soiled diapers.
- 2. What is a graywater system?
  - Graywater systems are onsite wastewater treatment systems (OWTS) that use graywater for subsurface landscape irrigation consisting of mini-trenches and subsurface drip irrigation systems.
- 3. Can I allow my graywater to discharge to the ground surface?
  - Due to the potential for high levels of bacteria and viruses in graywater, the surface application of graywater is not allowed. The subsurface use of graywater eliminates potential human contact or the creation of nuisances.
- 4. Can I use graywater for other purposes such as flushing toilets?
  - No, graywater is currently only allowed to be used for subsurface landscape irrigation.
- 5. Are there regulations for the use of graywater?
  - The regulations for designing and installing graywater systems are described in Appendix G of the California Plumbing Code. A copy of these regulations can be found on our website at <a href="http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/deh/water/lu\_septic\_systems.html">http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/deh/water/lu\_septic\_systems.html</a>.
- 6. Who regulates the use of graywater in San Diego County?
  - The County of San Diego Department of Environmental Health (DEH) has been delegated the authority to regulate graywater systems by the California Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) and oversees the unincorporated area of San Diego County. Incorporated cities in San Diego County can enter into an agreement with DEH to regulate graywater systems within their jurisdiction or can implement a program of their own with approval from the RWQCB. DEH currently has a delegation agreement in place with the Cities of San Diego and Vista.
- 7. Do I need a permit to install a graywater system?
  - Yes, plans for graywater systems must be submitted to DEH or the authorized permitting
    agency for review and approval of the graywater design. Once the design is approved, a
    permit must be obtained to install the graywater system and allow for inspection by the
    permitting agency. For more information on the review and permitting process, please
    review our Graywater Policy which can be found on our website at
    <a href="http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/deh/water/docs/lu\_graywater\_design\_criteria.pdf">http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/deh/water/docs/lu\_graywater\_design\_criteria.pdf</a>.
- 8. Do I need to contact any other agencies for the installation of a graywater system?
  - You need to contact your local building department to discuss plumbing, venting and
    electrical requirements as needed for either new construction or the retrofit of an existing
    structure where a graywater system is proposed. In addition, you need to contact your
    local water purveyor to discuss the need for the installation of a backflow protection device
    at the water meter.

- 9. What kind of plants can I irrigate with graywater?
  - Graywater can be used to irrigate fruit trees, ornamental trees, shrubs, groundcover and lawns. Graywater should not be used in vegetable gardens. Be aware that soaps and detergents can contain a variety of chemicals to aid in cleaning that may be harmful to your plants. Please contact your local landscape specialist for more information.
- 10. Where can I find more information on graywater?
  - Additional information is available on our website at <a href="http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/deh/water/lu-septic-systems.html">http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/deh/water/lu-septic-systems.html</a> or you can call one of the following Land and Water Quality Division offices.

El Cajon
 San Marcos
 San Diego
 619-441-4411
 760-471-0730
 858-565-5173

In addition, the California Department of Water Resources has a document that was developed in 1995 called the "Graywater Guide" which is available at <a href="http://www.owue.water.ca.gov/docs/graywater guide book.pdf">http://www.owue.water.ca.gov/docs/graywater guide book.pdf</a>. Be advised that the regulations for graywater have changed since the creation of this document but there is general information regarding graywater systems that you may find useful.